

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00

INRE-00 IO-13 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 ACDA-07 OMB-01 DHA-02

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1839

INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 106

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM

CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG

CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER

CIA WASHDC

COMSIXTHFLT

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FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

DIA WASHDC

CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 7589

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION SEPTEMBER 21

REF: BEIRUT 7547

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1. SUMMARY: ACTING PREMIER CHAMOUN MEETS WITH CABINET AND

OMINOUSLY LEAVES SESSION OPEN UNTIL SEPT. 23 "TO TAKE CARE OF ANY EVENTUALITY." SARKIS MEETING WITH FRANGIE TO DISCUSS PASSING OF POWERS. NATIONAL MUSEUM BUILDING SAID SELECTED FOR INAUGURATION BUT RADIO LEBANON CLAIMS CHTAURA CHOSEN. CLASHES AMONG KATAEB, PRO-CHAMOUN GROUPS AND OTHER RIGHTISTS CONTINUE. FRANGIE OPPONENTS DENOUNCE PRESIDENT'S FAREWELL ADDRESS. MODERATE PALESTINIAN LEADER HANI AL-HASSAN SAYS PALESTINIANS AT CHTAURA WANTED TO PROPOSE TRUCE AND APPLICATION OF JULY 29 ACCORD. CHTAURA MEETING COMES UNDER FURTHER ATTACK FROM LEFTISTS. PRESS REPORTS "AT LEAST 60Z SHERMAN TANKS IN RIGHTIST ZONE. GROUND SITUATION CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE. END SUMMARY.

2. CABINET MEETS. FIRST MEETING OF RESHUFFLED CABINET HELD SEPT. 20 AT KFOUR, ATTENDED BY FRANGIE, CHAMOUN, GHASSAN TUEINI AND NEW APPOINTEE GEORGES SKAFF. THIRTY-MINUTE MEETING BROUGHT THREE DECISIONS: (1) TO LOWER ARMY RETIREMENT AGES, WHICH MAY AFFECT SOME 35 PERCENT OF OFFICER CORPS INCLUDING COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF HANNA SAID; (2) TO BRING BEFORE PARLIAMENT AS MATTER OF URGENCY PREVIOUSLY SHELVED LEGISLATION ON A HIGH COURT TO TRY MINISTERS AND PRESIDENTS FOR TREASON; AND (3) TO LEAVE CABINET MEETING OPEN UNTIL SEPT. 23 "TO TAKE CARE OF ANY EVENTUALITY IN CASE OF NEED." IF NEW PRESIDENT FOR SOME REASON DOES NOT ASSUME OFFICE SEPT. 23, CHAMOUN AS ACTING PREMIER OF IN-SESSION CABINET BECOMES ACTING HEAD OF STATE. TUEINI SAID HE ATTENDED SESSION AS IT WAS HIS DUTY. SKAFF FOLLOWED MEETING WITH ANNOUNCEMENT HE WOULD PAY PRESENT MONTH'S SALARY TO ALL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING THOSE OF EASTERN ZONE NOT PAID IN SEVERAL MONTHS. CHANGES IN ARMY COMMAND WERE NOTABLY NOT DISCUSSED.

3. SARKIS. PRESIDENT-ELECT SCHEDULED MEET SEPT. 21 WITH FRANGIE AND FORMER PRESIDENT HEELOU TO DISCUSS TRANSITION, COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING, AND SARKIS' MEETINGS IN CAIRO AND CHTAURA. OFFICE OF PARLIAMENT MET SEPT. 20 TO STUDY BRIEF BY LEGAL COUNSEL PROFESSOR GEORGE VEDEL WHICH INTERPRETS CONSTITUTION TO MEAN PRESIDENTIAL INVESTITUTE MAY OCCUR OUTSIDE BEIRUT IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND THAT PRESIDENT-ELECT MAY BE SWORN IN BY PRESIDENT OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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ASSEMBLY OR BY OFFICE OF PARLIAMENT IF CIRCUMSTANCES PREVENT FULL PARLIAMENT FROM SITTING- AN-NAHAR SAYS NATIONAL MUSEUM BUILDING HAS BEEN SELECTED AS INAUGURAL SITE BUT RADIO LEBANON CLAIMS CHTAURA CHOSEN.

4. RESPONSE TO FRANGIE. FRANGIE OPPONENTS REJECT HIS FAREWELL MESSAGE. RAYMOND EDDE DESCRIBES IT AS "A TISSUE OF LIES AND ERRORS." CHAFIC WAZZAN SAYS IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO

IGNORE ALLEGATION THAT "MOSLEM LEBANESE ARE TOOLS OF THE PALESTINIANS." CLOVIS MAKSOUD DESCRIBES FRANGIE AS SEZWING ESCAPE JUDGMENT OF HISTORY THAT HE ATTEMPTED STRANGLE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION AND WAS FIRST TO ARM THE MILITANTS AND CALL IN MERCENARIES.

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1840

INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE PRIORITY 107

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

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6. MODERATE PALESTINIAN POSITION. HANI AL-HASSAN SAYS

PALESTINIAN DELEGATION AT CHTAURA WAS READY TO PROPOSE TWO-WEEK TRUCE AND APPLICATION OF JULY 29 ACCORD CLAUSE CALLING FOR FORMATION OF A LEBANESE/PALESTINIAN COMMITTEE TO APPLY CAIRO ACCORD, BUT SYRIAN AND LEBANESE INSISTENCE ON RETREAT FROM MOUNTAINS PREVENTED AGREEMENT. HOWEVER, CONFIDENTIAL

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AL-HASSAN SAID, PALESTINIANS RESPECT SARKIS FOR HIS SUPPORT OF CAIRO ACCORD AND OF RIGHT OF PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON. HE SAID FRANGIE RESHUFFLED CABINET IN ORDER TO PARALYZE SARKIS. AL-HASSAN DESCRIBES SYRIAN/PALESTINIAN RELATIONS AS AT CRITICAL STAGE AND CALLED FOR EFFORTS TO OVERCOME CLIMATE OF TENSION, SAYING SYRIA SHOULD "MAKE AN OVERTURE TO THE PALESTINIANS AND THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT."

7. LEFTIST POSITIONS. KAMAL JUNBLATT CRITICIZES SARKIS FOR ATTENDING TRIPARTITE MEETING BEFORE HIS INAUGURATION, SAYING PRESIDENT-ELECT SHOULD HAVE WAITED UNTIL HIS INVESTITUTE AND THEN ACCEPTED NEGOTIATIONS ONLY WITH SYRIAN HEAD OF STATE. LIKE PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS, JUNBLATT SAYS SARKIS TOOK VIEWS OF KFOUR FRONT AT CHTAURA. MURABITOUN LEADER IBRAHIM QULAYLAT SAYS REAL CAUSE FOR CHTAURA FAILURE IS PLOTTING OF VARIOUS ARAB GROUPS AGAINST LEBANON. HE SAYS "ISOLATIONIST" MEDIA SEEKING TO CREATE PESSIMISTIC ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING SARKIS' ASSUMPTION OF POWER, AND ACCUSES CHAMOUN OF SOWING DOUBT THAT SARKIS WILL EVEN BE SWORN IN.

8. SHERMAN TANKS. PRESS REPORTS "AT LEAST SIXTY" SHERMAN M-54 TANKS RECEIVED BY KATAEB AND NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY THROUGH JOUNIEH, MANY IN PAST FEW DAYS. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR COMMENTS ON INCREASED FIRE POWER AMERICAN-MADE TANKS GIVE RIGHTISTS. WE UNDERSTAND RIGHTISTS DO HAVE SEVERAL SHERMAN TANKS (SIX TO TWELVE THAT WE KNOW OF) BUT DOUBT FIGURE COULD BE AS HIGH AS 60.

9. GROUND SITUATION. MILITARY SITUATION CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE. L'ORIENT-LE JOUR REPORTS COMBAT OF A "RARE VIOLENCE" AT BAHAS IN THE NORTH AND TANK BATTLES NEAR TRIPOLI. IN THE MOUNTAINS SYRIANS AT SOFAR REPORTEDLY HAVE HEAVILY BOMBARDED PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST POSITIONS AT HAMMANA, SALIMA AND QURNAYEL. ARTILLERY DUELS CONTINUE IN THE GITH METN. FIERCE FIGHTING REPORTED FROM ALEY/KAHALE FRONT. IN BEIRUT THE COMMERCIAL CENTER AND CONFRONTATION LINES ARE VERY ACTIVE. COMBAT REPORTED IN SUBURBS AT AIN EL-RUMMANEH AND IN GALERIE SEMAAN AREA. L'ORIENT ESTIMATES 111 KILLED COUNTRYWIDE, 175 WOUNDED.

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## Message Attributes

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